



SCARBROUGH
BUILDING

EST.
1909



AUSTIN'S ORIGINAL.

In 1839, Downtown Austin was yet to be developed and Sixth Street was simply a dead-end trail leading to Brenham. The Colorado River was being used for navigation and to bring supplies and materials in from the Gulf of Mexico, but water levels were inconsistent creating challenges for voyagers. Also in 1839, Mirabeau Lamar, the Second President of the Republic of Texas, is said to have hunted a trophy buffalo near the current crossing of Eight Street and Congress Avenue. This same year the decision was made to make Austin the Capital of Texas. This decision started the planning for Downtown Austin's street system, with the intersection of Sixth Street (then Pecan Street) and Congress Avenue being at the epicenter.

On August 1, 1839, a land auction was held to raise funds for the development of the new Capital city. In his foresight of the importance of the location, Alexander Russell purchased the southwest corner of Sixth Street and Congress Avenue (the current location of the Scarbrough Building) for \$2,800. This was the highest price paid for any lot in the auction. Emerson Monroe (E.M.) Scarbrough purchase the site of the Scarbrough Building in 1905. E.M. was born in Northern Alabama in 1846 into a family with 11 siblings. His father died when he was the age of four. At the age of eighteen, Emerson joined the Confederate Army, but returned to the family farm after the war ended. E.M.'s mother gave him a \$1,000 gift on his 21st birthday and he set out for Texas. E.M. first started in the retail business at Hale & Evans country stores in Bryan Station and eventually went into business opening a store with Mr. Hale in 1874. The Scarbrough family moved to Austin in 1889 in search for more opportunity.

The Scarbrough Building was a pioneering development and was the tallest building between New Orleans and San Francisco when completed. The building was designed in Chicago style by Fort Worth architects Sanguinet and Staas and was constructed by the James Black Construction Company of St. Louis from 1908-1909. Mesmerized by the scale of the project, Austin residents took bets whether the city's first steel and concrete structure would stand or fall. The new 65,000 SF Scarbrough Department store opened offering a truly unique shopping experience and was said to be the finest department store in Central Texas. High-end finishes were used within the construction, including terrazzo floors for the corridors and toilet rooms, Tennessee marble for the elevator lobby, Italian and Tennessee wainscot and even a vacuum cleaning plant with connections on each floor (a marvel for its time). The entire building has heated by steam through 250 radiators and lit by electricity from a power plant located in the basement. The building boasted an air-conditioning system, hot and cold water in all washrooms and even ice water faucets on each floor for drinking water. Above the retail store stood six floors of office space which housed 126 business offices.

The Scarbrough Department Store was innovative in that prices were set for all items, eliminating the usual business of haggling prices and they were the first in Austin to extend credit to customers. The store consisted of ten different departments on the first floor alone with upwards of 35 sales people to select from "a full and complete line of dress goods, white goods, calicoes, gingham, staples, linens, towels, napkins, curtains, hosiery, insertings, corsets, notions, hats, shirtwaists, trunks, valises, and a full line of gents furnishings." Throughout 1916 – 1931 the department store was further remodeled, expanded and modernized in art-deco style to eventually house a three-story, 95,000 grand store. Early occupants of the offices above the department store included prominent physicians, real estate offices and attorneys. The Scarbrough Building offices were the premier location for businesses. Some of the well-known names within the building include: Zachary T. Scott, Ralph Steiner, Henry L. Hilgartner, E.H. Perry, R. Niles Graham, M.M. Shipe & Son, George W. Walling, Jr., E.C. Kreisle, M.H. Crockett, A.J. Kleberg, S.J. VonKoenneritz, John H. Chiles, Jr., the City's Attorney's office, Texas Tarriff Bureau, the Austin Saengerrunde Home Company, Texas StateEmployment Service, Gossip Advertising, Missouri-Kansas & Texas Land Company, H. Granberry, and the Austin Typewriter Exchange.

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WHERE AUSTIN'S HISTORY
AND FUTURE MEET.

522 CONGRESS AVENUE | AUSTIN, TEXAS 78701

